

PEOPLES OF THE LAKE NYASA REGION

88 return to the *lapanda*, where the initiates are welcomed by their friends. An essential
 85a part of the ceremony which takes place at this stage is the exhibition of animal shapes
 made by the *w'mirira*, with mounds of earth outlined in flour. These animal shapes
 differ from lodge to lodge. On the last night before the return to the village the
 initiate undergoes a ceremonial bathing, each boy being carried to the stream by a
 553 woman, who thereafter is addressed as 'elder sister'. Finally, with new names, and
 freshly oiled and decorated, they march to the chief's village to be rededicated by him
 57 from the *w'mirira* with gifts of cloth. After initiation it is a deadly insult to call a boy
 by his child-name. All who pass through initiation together consider themselves
 bound by mutual obligations of hospitality.¹

Girls' initiation takes place in three stages. First, there is *ripats*, the general initiation
 before puberty, which corresponds to the boys' *lapanda*. It takes place at the same
 time of year, and though it lasts for less than a week, its conclusion is celebrated at
lapanda jointly with the conclusion of the boys' initiation. A hut is built in the bush,
 like the long dormitory of the boys, and four days are spent in dancing and singing.
 Each girl (aged about eight years) is accompanied by a sponsor, a woman friend who
 continues to be her mentor during subsequent rites, and who assists in giving the girl
 instruction in her womanly duties. At the end the girls are bathed and anointed,
 dressed in new clothes, and each is carried to *lapanda* by her sponsor. Here they prove
 their skill in dancing and receive gifts from their friends. Ritual defecation follows the
 100 *ripats* initiation.² Among Mohammedans, clitoridectomy used to be performed by a
 177 woman operator, but, it is said, was discontinued in about 1903 on account of the
 heavy mortality.³

After this first general celebration, first pregnancy and first birth are the occasions
 80 of separate rites for each girl. According to some informants there were once two
 84 ceremonies connected with pregnancy. One, for the young married men whose wives
 64 had not yet conceived, used to take place at the same time as *ripats*; each man was
 attended by a woman sponsor not his wife, given good advice, and put through various
 tests of manhood. Mitchell does not confirm the present existence of this ceremony,
 but in the old days if a man was betrothed or married to a child going through her
ripats he had to accompany her.

83 The *litiso* ceremony takes place when a young married woman quickens with child
 74 for the first time.⁴ The woman, with her sponsor and the married women of the
 neighbourhood, went out in procession for a ceremony of singing and dancing and
 instruction to the young couple, followed by a feast. Nowadays no men are allowed
 80 to attend *litiso*. A child born of a woman who had not undergone this rite used to be
 buried alive; nowadays her *ayewe* *mbumba* is charged by the chief.

84 Finally, six days after the first child is born, its naming ceremony forms a last
 553 initiation rite for its mother. The husband is formally led into her hut by her sponsor
 and the married women of the neighbourhood, and the child is taken out for the first
 time to the accompaniment of feasting and dancing.

84 Most Yao men and women act as sponsors of initiates at least once, and all parti-

85 ¹ Sources for boys' initiation: Sumner and Dorey, 1913; Warner, 1906, pp. 122-6; Sumner, 4, 1902, pp. 247-62; Haskel, 1935, pp. 19-22; Johnston, 1897, p. 409; Wade, 1, 1900, p. 304.

² Sumner, 4, 1902, p. 250.

³ *Ibid.*, 1, 1900, p. 296.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 1902, p. 274; Haskel, 1935, p. 23, calls it *litiso* (Jolly).

The Composition of Modern Chiefdoms

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Native Authority, to the Native Authority, and eventually to the District Commissioner if the case is one which he will countenance. In practice, most cases reach the chief and go no further. Most people accept his decision. Thus the chief has important judicial functions.

THE CHIEF AS HIS PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVE

In special situations where the welfare of the chiefdom as a whole has been endangered by an infringement of the mores, the chief may take action. For example, a chief prosecutes a village headman who allows a woman in his village to bear her first child before she has been through the *litivo* ceremony. Every woman who becomes pregnant for the first time must undergo this ceremony, during which she is instructed in child welfare and child care. If she bears a child without undergoing the ceremony, she is said to have 'spoilt the country' (*ajalwice clambo*), in the sense that she has besmirched its reputation.¹

Chiefs usually call in magicians² to 'smell out' those responsible for keeping back the rain.³ When the rains fail as they did in 1948-9, their failure is held to be due to the magic of some evilly disposed person. It then becomes the chief's duty to call in a magician to indicate who this person is. The fees for this duty are paid by the chief himself on behalf of his people.

The chief also acts as a representative of his people when they are affected as a whole. For example, Nyambi called in a magician after man-eating lions had taken some of his subjects. This magician called for the hearth-stones and domestic utensils from all the villages in the area, and built them up into a pyramid over which he made some anti-lion medicine. This was to clear the whole chiefdom of man-eating lions.

Nowadays, the chief's representation of his people is seen most clearly in his position in the Administrative framework.⁴ The chief represents the Administration to his people since they approach it through him. At the same time the Administration clearly treats him as the representative of his people and consults

¹ I was told in Mpinda's area that the women undergo this ceremony after the birth of the child, but that it is still obligatory.

² *Katene ale-lit*, 'to tie or bind the rain', in the sense of to make it a prisoner.

³ I have dealt with this aspect more fully in 'The Political Organization of the Yao of Southern Nyasaland'.

621 making the oblation, pours the beer or sprinkles the flour at the
 613 root (*lipata*) of a shrine-tree. As would be consistent with this
 769 way of looking at the lineage, genealogically-distant ancestors
 are said to be 'below' (*pas*), so that if a Yao wishes to say that a
 certain person was a matrilineal ancestor many generations back,
 he would say that he was 'very much below'.

THE CONCEPT OF 'THE MOTHER'

613 The matrilineal descendants of the founder look upon them-
 562 selves as having been fed from the same breast and may express
 this by saying 'we are of one breast'.¹ Deep sentiment is
 843 attached to the idea of the mother among the Yao. There is,
 for example, a sharp distinction drawn between those women
 who have had children and those who have not. When a
 woman becomes pregnant for the first time, she is given instruc-
 tion in child welfare when she undergoes a special ceremony
 (*litiwo*). This is a ceremony which is publicly announced and
 attended by most of her matrilineal and other kinswomen and
 acquaintances. No woman may attend this ceremony if she
 has not herself had a baby. Thus her change in status in the
 community is clearly shown by the public recognition of her
 condition, and the fact that she is initiated into secrets which are
 shared by other mothers only. Her position in the lineage is
 much enhanced when she becomes a mother. It is the most
 important step towards becoming a village founder herself.

562 The concept of 'the mother', in general, also appears in the
 601 boys' initiation ceremonies. Certain phases of ceremonies may
 881 be conducted only with the help of the women. They have to
 clap the rhythm to which the 'tailmen'² do their dances. Here
 all women are classified as 'mothers' and without their co-
 operation the ceremonies could not be conducted. During the
 same ceremonies three women appear with baskets of food on
 their heads. The tailmen remove the baskets and sacralize the

¹ *Tuli peilele pamo*. The word *mlango*, a doorway, is also commonly used. The idea in essence is exactly the same. It is the concept of the children who come to settle around a woman's hut door. It is used as *Gwanda pamlango pao*, the people of his lineage section.

² The *m'mchira*. These are the functionaries in the initiation ceremonies. They carry medicated rebra tails during these ceremonies, and this gives them their names. See especially Stannus, 'The Wayao of Nyasaland', 229 ff.

613 members goes to an outsider and grumbles to him about the
 754 family squabbles¹ and quarrels. The outsider then takes the
 578 opportunity of using this squabble to introduce his sorcery into
 626 the lineage. The Yao greatly fear backbiting because of their
 dread of sorcery and none dreads it more than a village headman,
 a warden of a sorority-group,² or a person in the position of
 having to keep a matrilineage or section together. These people
 are continually adjuring the women under them—for it is the
 women who are believed to be the main culprits—not to fight
 among themselves; and if they do, not to take their complaints
 to an outsider but to the senior member of the matrilineage. The
 significance of this in relation to lineage unity is plain enough.

613 Apart from sorcery, strained relationships between members of
 578 a matrilineage are believed to be dangerous for other reasons.
 843 Malice may adversely affect people who are in mystically danger-
 224 ous states. The most common of these states is pregnancy. If
 a woman has a quarrel with a matrilineage member while she is
 pregnant she is likely to have a difficult labour. The Yao say
 'the womb has heard these bad words'. Another situation
 where malice or quarrelling will cause difficulties is in hunting.
 The luck of the chase is capricious and malice may easily bring
 bad fortune to an otherwise good hunter. For example, a
 successful hunter once gave each of his two sisters a piece of
 venison. Each complained that the other had been given the
 larger piece and quarrelled vehemently about it for weeks. The
 hunter now found that no game fell into his traps. He went to
 a diviner who indicated the quarrel of the sisters as the cause of
 his failure and told the hunter to get them to 'blow water'
 (*kuperya*). He did this; good relationships were restored and
 his traps were filled once more.

613 These deleterious effects, like the curse, are connected in some
 578 way with the ancestor spirits. This is sometimes expressed quite
 769 clearly when a person is called upon to 'blow water'. A
 755 mother who wishes to revoke a curse, a woman who wishes to
 recant her malice towards her matrilineal relative who is suffering
 in childbirth, or a man whose sister's son is ill supposedly because

¹ This is called *miari*, which I have translated as 'backbiting'. This idea is extremely important, so we shall see later.

² i.e. those men who are responsible for their sisters and their descendants. See p. 145 ff.

585 from of her married life begins. The man and woman live together peacefully enough as
 a rule, each attending to his own sphere of work. The man builds the house, the woman
 462 made the floor; she sweeps and cooks, she is the hewer of wood and drawer of water. The
 man hunts, fishes, makes mats, baskets, the grain store, game traps, and bark-cloth; he
 looks after the tobacco, and makes the snuff, while his wife brews the beer. He it is who
 fashions the gourd vessels and carves the spoons, while the woman is the potter (Pl. III, 4)
 and pipe-maker. Together they hoe and together they harvest, but to the woman falls the
 monotonous drudgery of pounding and sifting the corn for flour.

842 The Yao have a custom like that of the Anyanja. A sister brings to the house of the
 newly wedded pair a log of green wood from a *salween* tree which is very hard; the log
 [522] may be two feet in diameter and four feet long. Should the bride not become pregnant
 before it is burned away, the husband is laughed at and they may both be teased by having
 [558] many logs brought to the house. A man who has no children is much despised and there
 is a saying, "He must have eaten some ground-mice," punning on the word for a thick-
 [837] skinned variety of ground-out, *chinbawila*, a word which also means sterility. An impotent
 man may, with the consent of his wife, introduce some male friend into the house, any
 children born in consequence being claimed as the husband's. He usually chooses some
 friend from a distance to obviate any attachment springing up between him and the wife.
 Two married couples may, all consenting, exchange consorts for the night, but they never
 live together like this for long periods.

582 There is one well-defined marriage taboo; a man may not marry a woman of his own
 clan. In the old days, he was also restricted to his own tribe, except in the case of slave
 [617] wives and wives by capture. Since the clan is inherited from the mother, a man may not
 marry the daughters of his maternal uncle, but he may marry his other female cousins.
 [587] He may not marry two sisters nor a deceased wife's sister; neither do two brothers marry
 two sisters.

595 The number of wives is limited only by the husband's ability to provide for them. In
 addition to free wives, a man might formerly have a number of slave wives. The head wife
 is called *Isupeto*, the other wives, *manqanda*. The word given by Mardonahd, *aisupeto*,¹
 meaning the junior wives, is a Chinyanja word and, I think, wrongly applied.

582 It has been said that a man always marries into the village of his wife. For this reason,
 [617] female children are always prized as it means an increase in the number of able-bodied
 men added to the village. In rare cases, the wife might be taken to the husband's village,
 [582] as is the Anyanja practice.² This, of course, is true in the case of chiefs and headmen. Here,
 we may also note that no payment is made for the wife and no dowry is received with her.

584 To revert to betrothal, occasionally the sponsors will not agree to the marriage and a
 runaway match takes place, but in the end, the marriage is usually regularised by the
 [584] sponsors coming to an agreement. If, however, the woman has in the meantime become

¹ *Vide* *ibid.*, p. 121.² *Op. cit.*, p. 121.³ *Stannus, op. cit.*, p. 221.

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pregnant, the meeting of the sponsors will have to be postponed until after the ceremony connected with her first quickening with child, *Lolise*.¹ This ceremony must be performed whether the girl is regularly married or not. One party cannot ask the other for permission that both ceremonies take place at the same time. The answer would be given, "You are asking me to kill two beasts with one bullet." In rare cases, the chief may sanction the marriage and *Lolise* ceremonies taking place at about the same time, i.e. the marriage is arranged before the child is born.

Widowhood. A widow is considered unclean for a period after the death of her husband. She wears a band of palm-leaf or string around her forehead. When the period is passed and some man wishes to marry her, arrangement is made with some other man to cohabit with her for payment; she is then said to be clean and can go to her prospective husband. This ceremony is called *Isoma apaxi*, "to cut the strings," or in Chinyanja, *ku-dala mase*, "to cut the palm"; unless it is performed, the new husband will sicken. The man introduced for the purpose is called by the Yao, *Nhwa*, the "hyaena," "he who comes by night."

Divorce. From time to time, married people disagree and one deserts the other. If the woman leaves the man, he has a claim against her and the man to whom she goes for all the clothes he has supplied her with during their married life. The husband usually sides with the wife's relatives and arranges that they look after the children; he does not claim them. When the husband and wife mutually wish to separate, they both meet with their sponsors and everything is duly arranged. The husband will give his wife an arrow, saying, "*Mpanda* (the arrow)," meaning, "If I come back, may it kill me." The place of the arrow may be taken by a bullet or any other object, even a piece of grass. The man will add, "*Suka, suka, no likomul* (rattling, rattling, it is a rat)," inferring that if his wife hears something rattling in the house, it is a rat, not himself trying to come back. There is no definite payment of compensation. If the woman marries again, she presents the "arrow" to her second husband as a sign that she has been freed from her first marriage; without this token, no man would marry her.

Actual adultery was in the old days very rare owing to the strict enforcement of rules, and the case of a woman demanding divorce on account of the adultery of her husband formed a *cause célèbre*. The case heard by the chief would last for days and hundreds of people would come to listen. Neighboring Anyanja pleaders would be invited to speak and great excitement prevailed, as these latter would be accompanied by their villagers, who, to the accompaniment of continuous drumming, would sing, "*Mhwenis chankafus m'aloza*" (The bush-buck has run his head into the net)," while they ran about running their heads into their game-nets.

Other causes of separation are neglect of duty, sterility of the wife, and habitual death of the children born.

¹ Vide infra, p. 274.² Chis.

843 *Pregnancy and childbirth.* An event of the first importance in the Yao world is the first conception or rather the "quickening" with the first child, *Létiwe*; this is described below, together with the other ceremonies of the *Usape*.¹ After the ceremony of *Létiwe*, the period of waiting until the birth of the child passes without further event. A point of medical interest is that native women suffer in many cases from "morning sickness" during pregnancy. That they may have perverted appetites is also recognized, grain husks and crabs being among the things most commonly desired. As the Anyanja,² the Yao believe that the child develops from the semen of the male, although the growth of the child is in some way connected with the mother.

844 When labor commences, the woman retires to the bush a few hundred yards away from her house, attended by some friend, seldom a midwife, and never by her own people, though the mother and the mother-in-law will probably be near the spot. If labor is not completed by evening, they return to the house and the birth may take place actually within its walls. [77] The attitude assumed in labor is the same as that adopted by the Anyanja,³ the patient semi-reclining in the arms of another woman who sits behind, grasping her belly. The vulva is anointed with a decoction made from the bark of the *uposa* tree as a lubricant, but no other help is given. *Kwidi* is the name given to the place of confinement; *m'hudi* means the house where the woman remains for a period after the confinement. The Yao recognize the protruding bag of amniotic fluid and call it the "oil-gourd". "*Chimoi chimoi*?" (The oil-gourd, has it broken?). They wait until the placenta is delivered before dividing the cord. This is done with the sharp edge of the outer covering of a maize stalk or sugar cane; a knife is never used. The section is made near the placenta or half-way between it and the child, after tying the proximal end with a bark string.

The woman who receives the child at birth is the *ambwape*, friend or godmother. If the infant is born in the bush, she carries it back to the house whither they go as soon as labor is completed. The mother herself, unless she is very ill, goes out shortly afterwards and buries the placenta in the ash-heap, using a stick to dig the hole, never a hoe.

846 After the birth, the mother and child must remain in the house until the umbilical cord separates, during which time the husband does not enter, though he may come to the door to look in at the child.

The day on which exit from the house is made, the floor is entirely replastered with mud. [85] The baby's head is shaved and a cross is made upon it with *ngema*, a kind of red pigment. [553] The husband may then receive the child and in the case of a first-born, it is he who gives it its name; other children may be named by the *ambwape*, the mother, or the aunt. [302]

When the mother leaves the house to appear in public, the *ambwape* who put her *liñe* on,⁴ removes it.

So long as the infant remains in the house, care must be taken as to persons allowed to handle it. A woman who has recently had a menstrual period or coitus with her husband,

¹ Vide infra, p. 274.² Siannus, op. cit., p. 228.³ Ibid.⁴ Vide infra, p. 274.

the red beads, he is jeered at and laughed to scorn. In this case, the white beads are held to indicate semen, the red beads menstrual blood.

Litise: This ceremony is enacted at the time when a young married woman quickens with her first child. *Litise* (*tu-tise*, to plait) refers to the plaited cord put round the woman's neck. The woman and her husband both are present, and in addition, only women, possibly with their babies.

For the man, *Litise* is looked upon as the third or completing ceremony of his *Unyago*. He must have been to *Lupende* and *Chiputu*, otherwise he cannot be admitted to *Litise*. If, however, the husband is not eligible, some other man who has completed his *Unyago*, is married, and has children, may act as proxy to a woman at *Litise*.

In every district there is generally some woman who arranges and conducts the ceremony. She is called *sakanga*; naturally, no European has been present at *Litise* but my information was gained from Kuliati, a woman who for years acted as *sakanga* in the village round Malemya's kraal, and Chilandana, her old mother who had acted in the same capacity before her and who had come from the old Machinga country where her mother in turn had been a well-known *sakanga*.

When a woman quickens with child for the first time, her women-folk visit the local *sakanga*, saying, "We are going to shave so and so (naming the woman) and to get bananas. Tomorrow, we start pounding flour. In three days we shall be ready, and you will come over to arrange things." At the appointed time, the *sakanga* having partaken of food early because she will not eat for the rest of the day, goes out of the village to some spot a half-mile away in the bush and there sees that all preparations are made and sufficient food collected. The food is supplied by the mothers of the man and woman, and consists essentially of beans (*njams* and *ngunde*), porridge, sugar-cane, and bananas, but no beer.

All being ready, a procession in single file leaves the village for the appointed place, the woman's sponsor leading, the woman followed by the husband and his sponsor (a woman), and the married women assembled from nearby villages. The sponsor is known as *nkumusi* or *olombwe*. Neither *nkumusi* nor *sakanga* may have sexual relations with their husbands till after the birth of the child. The woman wears bark-cloth stained black, but may wear blue cloth on returning to the village, while her husband is decked out in his finest cloths and ornaments. They have partaken of food early in the day as they fast until the next day.

Arrived at the place, the man and woman take up their positions on mats separated from each other by some twenty or thirty paces, each with his *nkumusi*. The man's *nkumusi* sits on the same mat with him and never leaves him throughout the ceremony. The woman preserves a dignified quiet but the man is expected to make the most of himself sitting with hands on hips, and displaying his fine clothes worn after the fashion of a chief.

While all the assembled crowd of women sit round in a semi-circle, the *sakanga* commences the proceedings, singing a number of songs to the woman and the man in turn,

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the other women joining in the refrain. A number of these songs are here given but each *sakanga* has her own favorites which she sings. They are only sung at *Litiso*.

Alitso, Nainjani: alitso Nainjani; Chorus Mbiranjirani.

Now you are clucking before laying an egg. Be content then, you must not be running about any more: (Chorus) Call her back for me.

Ku-teteru, "to cluck as a hen" comes from *te/ te/* the sound of the hen. Another song is:

Ateteru atole te. Chorus Ateteru.

You must cluck, cluck, cluck, little mouse.

A set of songs sung by Kuliati are as follows:

1. *Mtuo ngulwala, kumalamba; amao!*
I have a headache, surely; oh dear me!
2. *Jagala, jagala, chomwali, kutuka wanyama!*
Startled (like a rabbit), little girl running like a wild animal.
3. *Atungula'wa walapira ulamba!*
The rabbit they praise for its cleverness!
Kumalamba ngolokoto kumamba ilamba!
He caught (the name of a little bird) and cut his hair in the *ilamba* fashion!
4. *Uweji ndiri juu utima; ndigomile, Chenjerero apite!*
I have a good heart; I am contented, Chenjerero has gone!
Ajigire makwotageo, amao! achamao!
He has taken away all his dancing things, dear me! oh dear me!
5. *Wakumbaga'wala, lare! nowo atulanjira tsalele!*
Those who are speaking (an exclamation) show us that we may see!
M'loni ngwile mbungo, teteru, chikala, ngoleko, wajeje; ngolengoleko wajeje!
The bamboo has fallen with the wind, they shivered with fear (an alluvial plain), (a thing which is stuck) (well-dressed).

In native songs, full poetical license is indulged in and it is often difficult to give exact translations of them. The first has reference to the woman making a fuss because she feels ill with her pregnancy; this she is not supposed to do. Number 2 refers to the fact that she has a new experience which may cause her to be startled, but she need not fear. In number 3, *ngolokoto* is a bird which has a mark running back on either side of the mid-line of the crown of its head, resembling a method of hair dressing wherein two bands are shaved from front to back parallel to the mid-line. *Chenjerero* (number 4) is the name of a man but this reference is apparently now without point. Number 5 is sung by the *sakanga* when she hears murmurs of others in the crowd starting to sing other songs; she intimates, "Here are we singing, let us hear you others who wanted to sing; you are probably afraid now." In the latter part of this song, words are made use of which have a slang meaning known only to women. *Chikala* is a woman's slang word for the female pudenda; *ngoleko*,

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843 when in child-birth there is delay in delivery it is said of the woman "*Aholohu*," "she
538 is stuck," from *Au-holohu* "to be suspended, to be caught by a thorn"; *wejeje*, well
dressed, is a slang exclamation meaning "everything, everything is out!" The verse
refers, of course, as all obstetricians will recognise, to the moment of crowning of the
crowning head during parturition when it appears to be stuck; then suddenly it slips
over the perineum and "everything, everything is out."

843 The *nakongo* now gives way to the songs of the other women. In different districts
533 different versions of the songs are sung, but the other women will quickly pick up the re-
frain of the song sung by a woman who has come in from some distance.

843 After these songs, the *nakongo* instructs the woman and her husband in the care they
must take until after the child is born. Macdonald says, speaking of the instructions
"but of the quality, we prefer to be silent." What a pity he allows no one else to judge!

The woman is especially cautioned against sitting with her legs crossed; they must be
kept apart lest the child in her womb be suffocated. She is also told many useful things
concerning her pregnancy and confinement. The husband is cautioned to cease inter-
course with his wife or if he has intercourse, his wife may not lie on her back, lest the child
be injured.

[751] While this instruction is going on, all the assembled women cook and eat the feast
which has been made for them. When all has been said, the *nakongo* anoints the man with
castor oil, which has in the meantime been warmed, and ties round the neck of the woman
the *litivo*, a cord made of plaited bark-cloth with a tassel in front; at the base of the tassel
white beads are strung for good luck, and at the end of the tassel, red beads are affixed,
having symbolic reference to the haemorrhage at the time of childbirth. The woman wears
only a strip of calico of two hands breadth called *mlatu*. She is anointed on the head, body,
and limbs.

[431] The tying of the *litivo* is the sign for dancing to begin. It is a dance in which women try
to excel one another. They come with all their tattoo marks on buttocks, thighs, and ab-
domen renovated; they wear diaper-fashion a narrow strip of cloth, always black in color,
and round their bodies numerous strings of beads. With the beginning of the dancing,
their other clothes are thrown off and practically naked, they vie with one other in exhibit-
ing their charms and skill in dancing, which afterwards becomes the subject of much dis-
cussion among the women onlookers. "So and so is really too old and skinny for such
exhibition," and "So and so has buttocks as flat as a wall," while "Such and such a one is
fat and beautiful and dances wonderfully, with such *abendon*," etc. In front of the woman
is set a wooden plate, in front of the man a mat, and on these are thrown donations by
the dancers and onlookers, consisting of beads etc., or nowadays pennies and small silver
coins to help to pay the expenses of the entertainment and, in the woman's case, to buy
medicine which may be necessary should the baby fall ill. When the wedded couple are

¹ *Africana*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 128.

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generous and popular, the donations may mount up to a useful sum. Dancing goes on late into the afternoon when all return to the village. 843 ●

The man may not speak to his guardian again until after the birth of the child. The two women guardians, the *mbumusi* and the *nabango*, as a rule cease sexual intercourse with their husbands during the same period or, at all events, during the last month before the birth of the child.

The child born of a woman who has not gone through *Létiwe* is buried alive. [847]

Chieftainship. The Yao when they migrated to their present country were headed by a number of their chiefs. These eventually settled in different areas adjacent to one another, each ruling over a considerable tract of country. The chief was supported by a number of headmen, each of whom looked after a village; the chiefs and headmen in turn being assisted by the village elders. 622 643

Often among a chief's counselors one found a number of his relatives, and sons and brothers were often made headmen. A man assuming chieftainship often had to dispose of a brother of whom he was afraid. 643

Chieftainship is hereditary, the chief's name being passed on to each successor. Succession is to eldest son of the eldest sister or a son of some other sister. Failing these, it passes to a grand-nephew. If there is no acceptable adult nephew, a full brother may succeed.

Macdonald's account of the Malemya's succession¹ is, I believe, incorrect. The old Malemya (Nalutumbo) was succeeded according to custom by his nephew, Kasabola who, as Malemya, was called Ndalama. Kuntaja was not a younger brother of Nalutumbo or Kasabola, but a cousin of the latter. Ndalama was succeeded by a nephew, not the eldest but the second son of a sister, the eldest having already succeeded to the chieftainship of Kuntaja was therefore ineligible. The present Malemya will be succeeded by a grand-nephew, the son of a daughter of his eldest sister, his sister having no sons. [114]

A successor inherited all the wives and slaves of the deceased chief and all his goods and chattels, guns, ivory and gardens. Any small possessions might be divided among the deceased's children and in the case of guns, those who had always used them often laid claims not to be separated from their weapons; these claims were often allowed by the new chief. 643 428

In the same way, any ordinary man's successor is his nephew, the son of a sister, who inherits all goods and chattels and slave wives, but not free-born wives, nor gardens, which go to the free wives. Stock is generally divided among the children.

Before 1891, when a British Protectorate was formally declared over Nyasaland, each chief ruled supreme. He was consulted as to the dates for *Unyapo*; he directed the harvesting, etc.; he proclaimed war and generally was paramount among his people. It will be seen, therefore, that he was a busy man, but he received no direct remuneration. His wealth consisted of slaves and ivory. Slaves he obtained in warfare and as blood money. 643 [554]

¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 180.

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784

6. It is believed that signs of guilt are visible in the eye of a murderer; medicine is procured in the hope of getting rid of these signs.

7. The possession of the hair of another person is supposed to give the possessor power over that person, hence a medicine man, when the patient he has been treating is cured, shaves the patient and keeps the hair until payment is made.

[826]

8. A native with light greenish-grey eyes is not to be trusted. He is said to have eyes like a cat and is called *majerjeri*; these eyes are rare among natives.

9. It is unlucky for a child to get into a basket; he may be burned.

10. Should a woman turn the porridge pot upside down, every one who has eaten will become constipated. For the same reason, a woman, after turning out the porridge from the pot, just touches the top of the mass of porridge with the bottom of the pot.

11. A woman will never leave the pounding stick in the grain-mortar. Should she do so, the heavens would fall.

12. When a *seba* is killed, a knot is tied in its tail so that eating of the meat shall not cause indigestion.

13. It is unlucky to sit upon a headrest, the *maswilo*. The person would surely be bitten by a snake.

● [843]

14. If a man commits murder, and his wife is pregnant at the time, she must sleep on the spear used.

15. Children are told that they must not eat at night; that if they are hungry, they must lie quiet and try to go to sleep again. If they don't obey and sit up eating porridge, a long hairy arm will come through the fastened door and beg for some, the voice of the unseen saying:

[537]

"Npoo chimusi'cheni nupa ni njase!"

"Give me that which you put to your nose to smell and throw away,"

the repeated movements of the hand to the mouth (nose) and back to the pot being supposed to make the "bogey" think that they are not really eating but merely smelling and throwing away the food.

16. A male should not scrape the porridge off the porridge stick; this is only allowed to the woman. Should a man do so, it is supposed that when he goes hunting, he will hit anything he shoots at, only in the tail.

17. There is a saying that the men and boys may eat little pieces of porridge which fall out of the pot, while cooking, on to the supporting stones and it will give them power to escape unhurt from battle. The fragments are called *agulupaka*, (from *ku-lupaka* "to escape").

18. Children are instructed to take their food sitting down instead of being in a hurry and standing to take it. They are told that if they do not obey, their porridge will not go into their stomachs but into their legs and swell out their knee-joints.

262 no one will touch. With the exception of carrion birds such as the crow and the hawk, most birds are considered fit to eat. The hornbill is not eaten, as it is supposed to carry part of a corpse on its nose.¹ Fowls form a regular article of diet, but some taboos in this connection are mentioned elsewhere.

[825]

Eggs are eaten only by children and old people; that is, by those outside the child propagating age. Milk is never consumed in any form. They say, "What a disgusting habit, to suck the jules of an animal while it is still alive!"

● [843]

Pregnant women will not eat certain things lest the child be born with some deformity, such as the snout of a pig, or the white stripes of a zebra.

532

Art and decoration. Sculpture can hardly be said to be an art known to the Yao. The only piece of stone work I have ever seen was a granite boulder, on the surface of which cup-holes had been made for the game of *Bou* (Pl. IV, fig. 4).

Of late years, individuals here and there have begun carving wooden figures of men and animals. The Yao, of course, make no idols. It is uncertain exactly how long it is since any of these people started producing wooden figures. I should think that this art has sprung up within the past twelve or thirteen years, that is to say, since there has been a market for them among European residents. In the first place only natives and some of the common animals, the eland and leopard, were represented; since then, many animals and Europeans have been copied. The native is extraordinarily clever in reproducing characteristic features in dress, etc., so that a Portuguese is easily distinguished from an Englishman. The little models in ivory of animals and native household objects, made by the Swahili people on Lake Nyasa, have never been copied by the Yao. Neither do they make clay images of men and cattle as do the Zulu-descended Angoni and cattle-keeping Wankonde. No native would allow any wooden figure to remain in his house for fear of ill luck; the women especially would look askance at them, fearing some misfortune in their next pregnancy. Little wooden figures of birds, however, are sometimes seen affixed to the point of the hut roof.

[777]

[777]

The making of carved figures, then, is of recent introduction, or rather is a recent event in the evolution of the Yao, as they were not taught but self-inspired in the work.

The ability to make representations of objects by drawing appears in the same way to originate spontaneously here and there as a sport. Natives with a talent for drawing are found among all the tribes, and among the Yao, it is said, there have always been some who have been able to draw. Naturally enough, their reproductions are made on the walls of their houses, and their subjects are generally animals of the forest, sometimes men and houses, or some other object of particular interest (Pl. VIII, fig. 1). I also give sketches of some other drawings I have noted (Pl. XVIII); the line figure of a man at Makanjila's

¹ Vide *supra*, p. 337.

² Cf. A. Werner, 'A Native Painting from Nyasaland,' (*Jour. Afric. Soc.*, London 1909, vol. 2, no. 20, p. 190-192).

162 298 AN ESTIMATE OF FERTILITY IN SOME YAO HAMLETS IN
 589 IT SHOULD be noted that only 27—11 per cent. of the whole sample of 246 women—had never married and that 23, 80 per cent., of these (or 10 per cent. of the total) were under the age of 20 and therefore stood a good chance of yet marrying. Furthermore, 1 of the 4 women over 20 who had not married were known definitely to be incapable of marrying (one is insane and the other has violent epileptic fits).

There were 33 women who were divorcees or widows (21·3 per cent.), but it should be noted that 27 (or 11 per cent. of the 246 women) were over the age of 45 and therefore were past, or nearly past, the child-bearing period. Those in the younger age-groups stood good chances of remarrying. Table IV shows that though [586] the divorce rate is high¹ remarriage is common. By the time a woman's child-[587] bearing period has ended she has been married on the average 1·7 times. Few marriages are contracted after child-bearing ceases.

TABLE IV. *Marriages and Dissolutions of Marriage experienced by all Women over the Age of 13*

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Present age	No. of women	No. of marriages contracted	No. of divorces experienced	No. widowed	No. still married	No. of marriages per woman	No. of divorces per woman	No. of marriages per woman ended by death of husband	No. of marriages per woman still existing
13-20	45	22	1	..	21	0·49	0·02	0·00	0·46
20-30	79	104	36	4	64	1·32	0·45	0·05	0·81
30-45	70	121	30	16	55	1·73	0·71	0·23	0·79
Over 45	52	88	29	34	25	1·70	0·57	0·65	0·48
Total	246	335	116	54	165	1·36	0·47	0·22	0·67

842 These statistics, showing the early age of marriage, the early commencement of child-bearing, the high incidence of marriage among women, and the high rate of reproduction reflected in Yao culture. This is consistent with their social structure, [182] where the major corporate groups are kinship groups and reproduction is the [61] principal method of recruitment to the group. Furthermore, because the standard of living is almost at subsistence level, children do not entail the economic losses they do in Western society. On the other hand, they are expected to support their [593] aged parents when they themselves are economically independent. In other words, [888] there are few factors militating against reproduction and many in favour of it.

554 We may expect the beliefs and customs surrounding child-birth to reflect the value of reproduction. For instance, the Yao distinguish clearly between women who have [884] borne children and those who have not. When a girl becomes pregnant for the [182] first time she undergoes a special ceremony (*litiño*) attended only by women who [842] have borne children. This ceremony has many of the features of a *rite de passage* and appears to mark the passing of the woman to a new social status. Furthermore, [843] women are ascribed status according to the number of children they have borne. The word *amwali* signifies a young woman who has not yet borne a child; *amwali*

¹ Between a third and a half of the marriages contracted by women had been dissolved by divorce by the time that the child-bearing period had ended.